



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**Committee on Procedures
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Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance
Room 373, Parliament Buildings
Stormont
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28 April 2021

Dear Steve,

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Thank you for your letter of 29 January 2021 in which you asked the Committee on Procedures to consider amending Standing Orders to allow Committees, if they so choose, to include the sponsor of a PMB as an ex-officio member of that committee during the appropriate stages of the passage of the PMB.

You may be aware that the Committee was reviewing its strategic planning priorities and has now agreed to undertake a review of the processes and procedures associated with PMBs. Committee agreed its draft Terms of Reference at its meeting on 21 April 2021 and whilst I appreciate my response to you may seem to be somewhat delayed, I preferred to await the Committee's consideration of the ToRs prior to coming back to you with a response.

I am therefore pleased to inform you that the Committee agreed to include your request in its Terms of Reference which I have enclosed for your information. The Committee will be seeking the views of political parties and independent members in due course.

I trust you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

**Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures.**

Enc.

PMB Review: Terms of Reference

- i. To examine whether the system of support currently in place for PMBs is fair, appropriate and a good use of public resources
- ii. To compare and contrast any variations and limitations of the right to table PMBs in other legislatures
- iii. To review whether the current arrangements are equitable or whether they could be improved by requiring a consistent level of involvement of the Bill Office as well as public consultation prior to the PMB being submitted.
- iv. To consider whether committees, if they so choose, should be able to include the sponsor of a PMB as an ex-officio member of that committee during the appropriate stages of the passage of the PMB in order to allow the sponsor to ask questions of witnesses and thus provide necessary clarity to the committee.
- v. To outline whether there are any issues arising from the nature of the special circumstances of the Assembly which need to be taken into account, and, based on the above to consider whether provision should be made in Standing Orders to clarify:
- vi. Whether there should be scheduled / dedicated plenary days for PMB business
- vii. Whether there should be mechanisms by which a proposal must pass a simple majority or other measure of support before being provided with resources to be developed further
- viii. Whether there could be arrangements to allow Members to legislate as a group and for all their names to be attached to it
- ix. How Assembly plenary time might be maximised and prioritised towards the end of the mandate, when the level of PMBs and Executive legislation are likely to create significant pressures on Assembly business.